

## **GLASS SHATTERS LIVES**

This is written by Marjorie and Robert Golding, we are the parents of a statistic – a victim of crime – but crime is like a disease, spreading through an entire family affecting every member. Statistics we all know to be numbers on a computer screen, television etc. but behind every statistical number there is a face a family a story, this is Blake's story our son.

It was Christmas Eve 2004, we were all looking forward to Christmas, presents wrapped, veg and turkey prepared, we could now relax and start enjoying the holiday period. Robert my husband and Adrienne my daughter and myself were meeting friends for a drink in the town. Blake couldn't be with us, he had a second job as a doorman in Central Milton Keynes, he didn't mind going to work in fact he had volunteered for Christmas shifts, as he needed the extra cash, as with most young people he could spend quicker than he could earn. By the time we walked home it was nearly 12.30 – Christmas Day!

We turned the key in the door to the sound of the phone ringing, my heart was thumping, phonecalls late at night are rarely good news. It was a neighbour's son "Blake's had an accident" that was enough for me, I panicked, thrust the phone at Robert, I didn't want to hear the rest I was too scared. As it turned out it wasn't an accident at all, Blake had been bottled, as we all drove to the hospital that was the only information we had. We arrived A&E before the ambulance, we paced the corridor for about 15 minutes, not knowing how Blake was, then Marcus appeared, the Head Doorman, his hand bound with a homemade bandage. Blake was in a bad way, he'd lost 4 pints of blood, they couldn't stem the bleeding and he needed a transfusion, they were worried his body would go into shock, we were not allowed into see him. We waited an agonising 50 minutes from arriving at the hospital, nurses were toing and froing, blood stained uniforms. Finally a doctor came to see us, Blake was to go for surgery, there was no time to transfer him to Stoke Mandeville where there would have been a plastic surgeon. We were allowed to go in and see Blake, one at a time.

Robert went in first, as much as I wanted to rush in and see him, I was terrified and I couldn't let him see that. Robert came out looking visibly shaken and very upset. Adrienne and I allowed to go in together, she was too frightened to face it on her own, I took her hand and said "deep breath". Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw when I went through those curtains. My son lay on a trolley drenched in blood, there were trickles of blood still pouring from the sheets, footprints on the floor, and his face and neck were being held together by a male nurse. His first words to me were "are you OK Mum", typical Blake. I kissed him, we spoke for about a minute if that, then he was taken to theatre where he was to spend the next 4 hours. We went back to the waiting room, where by this time there was about 10 doormen and several of Blake's friends that had been in CMK and had heard what had happened, some of which had been with him as he sat propped up against a concrete pillar waiting 20 minutes for an ambulance – busy night! It was now we learnt what had actually happened. In a busy Club on Christmas Eve a member of doorstaff, female, had noticed a young man at the bar that had been previously barred, she approached him and asked him to leave the premises, he did so. On leaving he then decided to try and argue his way back in, the doorlady stood firm and would not allow him re-entry. Unbeknown to any of the staff, the young man's brother was inside the venue, and on seeing his brother arguing at the door, did no more than run over to the doorlady armed with a bottle and hit her over the head, thankfully the bottle did not break. Meanwhile Blake saw the commotion and ran over and restrained the attacker, pinning his arms to his side, it was at this point they both stumbled and fell over the step, the attacker then hit Blake across the eyebrow, breaking the bottle in the process, and drew the jagged glass up into his hairline. Immediately Blake's eyes filled with blood and he was unable to defend himself, whereupon he was slashed across his cheek. Blake's reaction was to curl up on his front and put his arms over his face, at this point he was stabbed in the neck, this is when Marcus, the head doorman was brave enough to intervene, he managed to pull the attacker off Blake and he himself sustained a cut to his hand requiring 6 stitches. In May 2005 the perpetrator of this horrendous crime pleaded guilty to GBH with intent – only because the police had an absolute water tight case against him – and it was in his best interests to do so. He received a two year reduced sentence, and in summing up the judge said he didn't want to ruin a young man's life, he served 7 months, was it taken into consideration that this would affect the rest of Blake's life? As I can tell you, he's not the same young man as he was before. Whilst in prison the offender was given –

free of charge – an anger management course and counselling – a reward for co-operative behaviour which would help reduce his sentence. Blake's first session of counselling, in this entire ordeal, took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2006, the cost will be taken out of any compensation he receives – a penalty for being the victim? – disheartening to say the least.

There are 5.500 REPORTED glass/bottle attacks a year 100 a week this can be multiplied by 3 for unreported attacks 16,500 a year, 300 a week, 2005 saw Government Compensation paying out £4.5 million for such cases. A survey of bar workers indicated that 40% of them had sustained accidental glass related injuries (mostly while stacking and washing glasses, one third of those needed treatment from A&E). In mid June 2005 we began a Nationwide Campaign to replace glass bottles with plastic and glasses with polycarbonate in NIGHT CLUBS and LATE NIGHT BARS in CITY/TOWN CENTRES with a young clientele, which statistically are shown to be most at risk. We travel to many areas to give presentations and we have spoken to quite a few venues who have already gone partially or totally plastic bottles/polycarbonate glasses with very impressive results, not only are glass attacks to staff and customers non-existent, but accidental injuries involving glass are too, dancefloors are no longer ruined, there are no constant glass breakages as the polycarbonate glasses far outlast glass, making them cost effective, venues are quicker to clean up at the end of the night as there isn't any broken glass to deal with, which provides a safer working environment, equally security staff are able to deal with disturbances easier as they don't have the added threat of bottles/glass, let's face it how difficult is it to keep a packed venue broken glass free during the course of the evening. Venues we have spoken to that have volunteered to be glass free have no desire to revert back to glass, their customers are more than happy with the alternative.

Our petition to date has received over 22,000 signatures of support, the vast majority is from young people who frequent Night Clubs and Late Night Bars. If the bottle that had struck our son was plastic he probably would have received a bruise and a nasty headache, instead he is scarred physically down one side of his face and neck and the mental scars have gone deep too, over a quarter of victims of facial wounds experience a serious post-traumatic stress reaction, which requires long term follow up. Bournemouth Town Centre have run a year long campaign introducing over 35 venues to polycarbonate, some are using the plastic bottles too, last year saw a reduction of 70% on a Friday/Saturday night at A&E – that speaks for itself.

This is hopefully where you can help, if you agree with what we are trying to achieve then please support us by signing the on-line petition which can be found on [www.pop-campaign.co.uk](http://www.pop-campaign.co.uk) and then following the link to e-mail your local MP to sign EDM 385, this will take minutes to do but could quite literally save someone from a lifetime of heartache and at the end of the day most of you, if not all of you are either a parent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle and you will all know and care for someone who goes to these venues.

We as a family are very proud of Blake. He has had the courage and determination to put his face to a Nationwide Campaign, in the hope that this will prevent the same horrendous ordeal happening again and somebody else being scarred for life. With the start of every new year, the statistics start all over again.

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[www.pop-campaign.co.uk](http://www.pop-campaign.co.uk)